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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MADRID 001113

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TAGS: ECON SP SNAR PGOV KCRM

SUBJECT: GALICIA POLICE CHIEF ON DRUG SMUGGLING AND LAW
ENFORCEMENT

MADRID 00001113 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Arnold Chacon for reasons 1.4 (b)
) and (d)

¶1. (C) In a conversation October 9 with Embassy representatives, the Chief of Police of the regional government of Galicia said that while criminal activity in Galicia remained relatively low (30 crimes per 1000 inhabitants), drug smuggling and the underground economy continued to be important law enforcement issues for Spain's National Police (SNP) in Galicia. He praised the close cooperation between Spain, the US and other international partners, saying that information sharing had been key to a number of successful counter-narcotics operations this past year. He also mentioned that although violent separatist leanings in Galicia were minimal, Galicia's SNP had cracked down on a group the previous week which had been planning to carry out terrorist activities. He provided no further detail on this group. End Summary.

DRUG-SMUGGLING IN GALICIA

¶2. (C) During an outreach visit to the northern region of Galicia, Econoff paid a courtesy call on its Chief of Police Luis Manuel Garcia Mana. Garcia Mana expressed his appreciation for the call, praising the close coordination between the US and Spain which has continued to allow for various anti-drug smuggling successes in Galicia over the past year. Garcia Mana stressed that crime activity in Galicia was very low at 30 crimes (of all types) per 1000 inhabitants, but acknowledged that drug-smuggling and the underground economy continued to be issues of concern in his region. (Note: Galicia is a noted entry point of cocaine and hashish from South America and North Africa, respectively. Estimates are that up to 80 percent of Europe's cocaine is smuggled in through Spain.)

¶3. (C) Highlighting recent trends, Garcia Mana said that more illicit drugs were being transported in maritime cargo containers and via planes than in previous years. Nonetheless, Garcia Mana's law enforcement personnel continued to pick up the "traditional" speed boats transporting drugs into Galicia from larger ships anchored in international waters. He explained that Galicia's strong maritime traditions, an extensive coastline, including miles of un-monitored inlets, and an already existing tobacco smuggling infrastructure from the 1970s were key reasons why Galicia became and has continued to be such a significant entry point for drugs. He added that the recent shift away from the fishing industry has led some unemployed seafarers to execute their trade as maritime transporters for drugs.

¶ 4. (C) Garcia Mana said that the underground economy was also a significant issue for the regional government, a large part of it related to money laundering of drug proceeds. He explained that a primary vehicle for money laundering was via the housing market and added that there had been a recent spike of 500 euro bills in Galicia. Garcia Mana acknowledged the strong links between the Galicia drug networks and Colombia cartels, noting that during 2000-2005, there were frequent incidents of violence when Galicia's own cartels had begun to "overstep" their bounds with their Colombian partners. Since then, successful police crackdowns and clearer delineation of territory had helped to diminish the violence.

SEPARATIST GROUPS IN GALICIA

¶ 5. (C) Speaking on separatist groups, Garcia Mana said that these leanings in Galicia were minimal, but that a slight threat of incipient separatist organizations still existed. He noted that his law enforcement personnel had been very successful in monitoring this activity and had prevented a group from carrying out terrorist activities in early October. Garcia Mana provided no further details. Note: According to open source information, on February 8, 2008 a homemade explosive device attributed to the "Galician Resistance" damaged the sales office of property development company Martinsa Fadesa in the Galicia town of Mino.

TENSIONS WITH JUDICIARY?

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¶ 6. (C) Asking that he not be quoted, Garcia Mana (protect) said that while law enforcement entities in Spain worked well together and were highly regarded, at times the goals of law enforcement, the judiciary and the penitentiary seemed inconsistent. He said that the three occasionally work in a counterproductive fashion, citing as an example the difficulties in obtaining judicial orders for surveillance activities. Note: The SNP, the Guardia Civil, and Spanish Customs all engage to some degree on counter-narcotics activities although there are differing views as to how well they coordinate.

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